

REMARKS

ADDRESSED TO

THE LORD PROVOST,
Mort-Safe and Watching Associations

OF

LINLITHGOW,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE DISGRACEFUL CRIME

OF

ROBBING THE GRAVES:

IN ANSWER TO TWO LETTERS, LATELY ADDRESSED

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD ADVOCATE

AND

THE LORD PROVOST

OF THE

CITY OF EDINBURGH,

PROPOSING A METHOD (BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT)

FOR OBTAINING

Anatomical and Physical Instruction,

NOT AFFLICTIVE TO THE FEELINGS, NOR INJURIOUS TO THE

MORALS OF THE COMMUNITY.

BY A MEMBER

OF THE MORT-SAFE ASSOCIATION.

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TO THE
LORD PROVOST,
AND TO THE
Mort-Safe and Watching Associations
OF
LINLITHGOW.

“ Thou shalt not steal.”

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN;

PERMIT me to submit to your consideration the few following Remarks and Observations on a prevailing and detestable crime; which demonstrates that the principles of Christianity are not the actuating motives of those who dub themselves the Literati of our Land; which exhibits our country the reproach of the world and ancient times; and lastly, outrages all the honourable and amiable instincts and feelings of our nature.

And to whom can I with greater propriety address these remarks than to you, or similar Associations, who, warmed with sweet attachment to the remains of valued friends and dear relations, and fired with abhorrence at the frequent and daring violations of their graves, have watched at the risk of your lives, beneath the inclement gloom of night; or constructed “PROTECTIONS” with great expense and ingenuity, which bid defiance to the nocturnal depredators, who daringly hazard their souls, and brave damnation.

And O! that my voice could flash trembling and conviction on these mercenary wretches, their employers, and con-

federates ; so as to compel them for ever to relinquish this abominable and beastly practice, which the lenient exercise of the law has permitted to exist too long.

“ Thou shalt not steal,”

Is the irrevocable mandate which thundered from Sinai, and was written on stone by the hand of the ETERNAL, and for ever obligatory on all generations. Are there any who profess to believe there is a God, that dispute or violate this command ? Yes, there are melancholy and numerous instances of daily occurrence in various forms throughout the world ; but which regulated society, in every clime and age, have agreed to punish : And which the awards of our own laws strongly establish, by numerous corrections and public executions. The poor unhappy father reduced to poverty, perhaps by a train of unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, the majesty and independence of whose principles will not permit him to solicit the cold hand of charity to obtain a pittance to support himself or starving family, sallies forth on the high-way, or enters the dwelling. The prodigal youth, reduced to indigence, to support existence, or to indulge accustomed debauchery ; by forgery, or other methods, obtains a temporary portion of the wealth of others, who little feel its loss. In vain the father pleads the desperation to which he was driven, or the son the necessity of his case, or his irresistible hatred to poverty ; the law is deaf, and with reckless vengeance consigns them over to punishment or death. With very many other petty delinquents which it is needless to enumerate. But what, I ask, is the enormity of these transgressors, compared to that of the polluted wretches, who with unhallowed hands carry off the remains of all on earth we valued most dear ? He that steals my cash (says Shakespeare) steals trash, 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ; (he might have added) but he that robs me of a friend's remains, robs me of what on earth I held most dear, and never can repay. Is the legislature all alive, when insignificant peculators invade the rights of the meanest individual ? Does the vengeance of the law fall with unsparing force upon the man who by improper means extorts an inconsiderable portion of our property ? And is it altogether inattentive, inefficacious, or conniving in delivering to condemnation, the robbers of the objects of our most tender regard ? Will the beastly perpe-

trators of such a crime, attempt to palliate their guilt, by saying, "He that is robb'd not wanting what is stolen, let him not know it, and he's not robb'd at all." My motto from the decalogue is an infinitely higher authority, and recognises no such inference or explanation.

It is certainly a most singular opinion which Baron Hume placed upon record; "THE RAISING OF A DEAD BODY FROM THE GRAVE, CANNOT IN ANY PROPER SENSE BE REGARDED AS A THEFT." Does he mean to convey the idea, that a dead body when laid in the grave has no owner, but whosoever will may take it away? or, 2dly, Does he mean, that the simple act of RAISING A BODY from the Grave is no misdemeanor? In either case, his opinion will appear erroneous. 1st, I would desire to ask, is not he that takes possession of the property of another, to which he has no title or right, and without his knowledge or consent, a thief? Sure it will not be maintained that death destroys the claims of propinquity. The burying spot in which I deposit a relation having become mine by inheritance, purchase, or gift, and on which a stone is raised, distinctly exhibiting my right; certainly what I deposit therein should be considered mine; therefore he that takes it away by night, unquestionably commits a theft; or, 2dly, It is perfectly evident, that the simple act of *raising a dead body* secretly by night, constitutes the strongest ground to believe an intention to carry it away. For the thief in whose possession I detect the goods stolen from my house, might say, it is true I have them, but I did not design to use them, or carry them away. Such a preposterous answer would not protect him from the execution of the law; and in this case it is completely ridiculous. If other high authorities, like the Baron, have determined to draw a line of distinction, by making this a crime, *sui generis*, the *crimen violati Sepulchri*; there is reason to fear that a resolution has been formed to restrict the punishment: And it now becomes our duty to unite in a petition to parliament, that this horrible crime may be made capital; and that the bodies of such transgressors may be delivered for dissection, for the benefit of the Faculty.

Are there not a number of miscreants at present who subsist solely by carrying on a constant traffic in human flesh; who supply, at a stipulated price, bodies to the medical students of Edinburgh, &c.? And have we not great reason to imagine, that their confederates are those who basely betray their trust, I mean the beadles, or grave-diggers of the parish, on whom the rigour of justice should fall with unsparing

severity ; and which the awakened sensibilities of the public will not now allow to pass with impunity.

What a horrific spectacle was presented by one of those guilty wretches lately in our streets, whose filthy vehicle, which was torn in pieces and consumed by fire, contained no fewer than *three naked human bodies, tyed together like common lumber*, extracted from a neighbouring burying ground ; for whose detection the public is much indebted to the gallant conduct of Mr Scott, Gilston. And with what difficulty was the public indignation restrained from the execution of summary justice on the diabolical possessor, who, we trust, will meet deserved punishment ? From this afflicting scene the most painful emotions have arisen, our imaginations have been continually haunted by the thoughts of such inhumanity—Our wives affrighted have clung to our bosoms, their sleep has been disturbed by distracting dreams, and our children have trembled, and would not venture to bed alone. Are not the grave, the coffin and the shroud, and all the other usual apparatus of death sufficiently alarming without such savage exhibitions ? And it is probable, these abandoned villains laugh at our fears, as they insult our feelings.

And still more recently, M^cNab and Mitchell, being charged before the Justiciary Court of Stirling for this most shameful crime, were liberated ; the diet being deserted *pro loco et tempore* ; but immediately upon their quitting the Court, the public indignation fell upon them, and the houses to which they fled, to such an extent, as to compel the Provost and Sheriff to call in the assistance of the military to quell the riot, in which several persons were wounded.

I sincerely hope that steps will be taken throughout the country immediately, to bring to justice all those who carry on such an accursed traffic. For this, like the Slave Trade, has been one of our national sins, and all ranks should feel a desire to wash away the bloody stain. We should feel ourselves disgraced, to permit such blood-hounds to exist in a land of humanity and christianity.

It is a common saying, “ That the *Reset* is as bad as the thief,” and our laws award the same kind of punishment to each. We fondly hope, that no Medical Professor worthy of the name, can employ such atrocious reptiles, or purchase the product of their villany ; we hope that in their possession no Skeleton or parts of the human frame can be found, but such as was legally obtained. For wherever a human body, or any of its parts is found, not obtained in this way, let an action lie against the possessor, for stolen goods.

Methinks I hear some of those who delight in delaceration exclaim, O! The Hydra of Superstition! the illiterate prejudice! and the figment of Popery!—Whatever epithets these gentlemen, in the plenitude of their omniscience may be pleased to confer upon us, we will not forego our adherence to reason, decency, and revelation.—How futile, unphilosophical, and infidel, is that sentiment in Physiology, that personal identity is lost, by the entrance and exit of the particles of matter that are occupied in the formation of our bodies by lapse of years. By analogy, the identity of the soul, may, with equal evidence, be disputed also; and the reason of man, and the oracles of God, be regarded as monstrous absurdities; and prove the brutality, irrationality, and irresponsibility of human nature! Does not decency and the practice of our country require, that before the bodies of our friends become offensive to our feelings, we bury them out of our sight? And has it not always been regarded as a duty, and a mark of our highest respect, to confer on them every possible honour in our power? And have not those who have given the most lasting testimony of attachment to their dead, had their names transmitted to posterity, with the highest marks of approbation? We are not so superstitious or bigotted, as to believe that our bodies, or the places in which they are deposited, become sacred or hallowed; but we cannot disguise our sentiments, that for them we entertain the highest respect: And who dares to arraign us for indulging such agreeable and inoffensive sensations? We need not be insulted by the information, that our dead can arise from the cabinet of an Anatomical Virtuoso, as well as from the tomb;—but our will is, and custom and decency require it, that a spot appropriated for that purpose, shall contain our mortal remains, till the last trumpet shall proclaim, “**ARISE TO JUDGMENT.**”

Hence ye profane!

Ask not, how this can be, sure the same power
That rais'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were.

I feel myself altogether incompetent chemically to explain the subsisting union betwixt the departed spirit and the dissolving body. St Paul himself, although caught up to the heavens, labours in vain to make it understood. When he says, “We are sown a natural, we are raised a spiritual body,” we conceive his meaning in the first, but the latter transcends our understanding, and seems to involve a contra-

diction. But DIVINE VERACITY has divulged it to man ; let us rejoice and believe. Yea, it saith, “ In thy book all my members were written.”

Is it not a natural and commendable desire, to sleep unmolested in the sepulchres of our fathers ? “ Thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place,” said the dying Israel to his son Joseph, who also gave command to his children, “ And ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”—Is not the example of such excellent men worthy of imitation ? The Poet says,

“ The Church-yard yews, round which his fathers sleep,
All rouse reflection’s sadly pleasing strains,
And oft he looks, and weeps, and looks again.”

And what stately monuments, at an incredible expense have sometimes been raised, ornamented by the finest productions of the sculptor and architect : And in which numerous lamps for ever burn, to perpetuate the memory of persons of distinction.

Are those hands which so often embraced me, which were always open to relieve the needy,—Are those eyes which beamed on me with ineffable delight,—those ears which were always shut to slander and open to the tale of woe,—that heart and tongue which always dictated the lessons of wisdom, and glowed with social kindness to all mankind ? Shall these, or all the other members of the body, so “ fearfully and wonderfully made,” and so lately the “ *Temple of the Holy Ghost*,” be rudely tossed from the slumber of the tomb, by some infernal, hired, mercenary villain ? O ! that some body would start from the grave, in most terrific form, to confound the savage monsters, and with a hoarse tremendous voice proclaim, “ *The Lord shall also deliver thee into the hands of death ; yet a little while, and thou shalt be with me.*”

Have you not heard, ye callous wretches, that the bodies of the Saints, are the objects of the Almighty’s tender regard, and that he will one day raise them up, to shine with transcendent splendour, conjointly with the soul ? Do ye laugh, ye infidels, when I say, *the bodies of the saints*, and ask me, By what means I have discovered that the bodies raised from the grave are the bodies of the saints ? I retort by asking, By what means have ye discovered that they are not ? I am, therefore, intitled to use the appellation, seeing that Revelation assumed to be the word of truth, authorises its application. For unquestionably, many of these have been raised by your

impure hands. But admit, ye sons of darkness, that the bodies raised from the grave were the bodies of sinners ; Who commissioned you, ye dæmons, like your father the devil, to execute the Almighty's vengeance ? You may contend, as he did upon a certain occasion, for the body of Moses, but in the powerful voice of the mighty archangel Michael, we cry aloud, "*The Lord rebuke thee.*" Tell me not that the bodies of our dead friends are altogether insensible to the treatment they receive.—I ask you, Are we the living equally insensible ? Are we to be agitated and tortured, for your avaricious gratification ? Can any advantage derived to you so unjustly, be put in balance with the painful effect produced in us by your shameful conduct ? Is there a man on earth, unwarped by self-interest, or unimpelled by avarice, but what will declare you monsters of depravity, whatever you may allege for the promotion of medical science ? But perhaps I argue in vain ; you are destitute of shame ; you are lost to every sentiment of humanity ; you are execrated by all mankind.—Turn with me, and read what is engraved on yonder stone, "*Here lies the body of ——— ———*" Alas ! false marble, it rests not here, it is carried hence, to form an object to the gazer's eye, to sport their fancy in its mangled parts, or fill the soul with libidinous desire. Now the swine licks his chops after his repast, or the fire blazes with its destruction.—See ! the fond mother clasps the turf beneath which her darling child is supposed to rest. There ! the lover with tearful eye, and heaving agony, waits at the grave, in which the enchanting Form should lie, on which the winds were not allowed to blow too rough, where elegance and grace sat fair proportioned, and for ever charmed, whose language was music, and kindness enrapturing, and altogether lovely. " The new made Widow too, sad sight ! prone on the grave of the dear man she drops, clings to the senseless turf," while sad remembrance swells her soul with bursts of sorrow ! The dear objects for which you grieve are gone ! Alas ! when darkness fell, the spoilers came and reft their graves, unfeeling men ! men did I say ? nocturnal cannibals ! prowling tigers ! fell and deadly ! She cries, (like Mary), "*Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away ?*" Did the Saviour of men weep at the grave of his friend Lazarus, who he resolved to raise to life again ? And are sorrow and affection for departed friends unworthy of imitation, undeserving of praise, after such an illustrious example ? Tell not me of the indifference of So-

crates, or of other great and good men, respecting their mortal remains, such disgraceful violations of the tomb were not contemplated in their days. No ! we will not repress those generous sympathies, or offer violence to the pleasurable and honourable instincts of our nature.

If we examine the history of all nations, barbarous or civilized, we will discover the strongest antipathy entertained against human dissection.

The Jews, the peculiar and distinguished favourites of Heaven, from which they immediately derived a code of laws, for the regulation of their conduct, are therein expressly commanded not to touch a bone or grave of the dead : And it is a well known fact, that the Jews, in obedience to this command, never disturb the ashes of their ancestors, or open a grave a second time. And this attachment was strongly manifested in annually whitening and garnishing their sepulchres, on the 15th day of the month Adar.

The followers of Brahma, all over the east, cultivate an enthusiastical respect for the remains of every creature that once possessed life, particularly the bodies of their departed friends.

We find many other parts of the world, especially Egypt, indulged an almost sacred reverence for the dead ; some of which, preserved by the art of embalming, remain until this day.

The disciples of Pythagoras and Plato, being strongly addicted to the theory of transmigration, forbade dissections of every kind.

Mahomet, and all his numerous adherents, are completely inimical to human anatomy ; for the Koran, as well as the Pentateuch declares, that they are unclean who only touch a dead body.

The Romans, the most enlightened people upon earth, were strangers to human dissection, save for the purpose of incantation alone.

The Abyssinians, even in our day, endeavour to preserve the bodies of their friends by every means. It is not uncommon to observe whole families, set up in their temples, arranged in niches, prepared for their reception.

In our country the grave closes its mouth on our friends, and we behold their faces no more. But there were room in the sepulchres of the Jews and others, for holding sad soliloques with the dead. Their bodies were laid prostrate on the back ; elevated rather more than two feet from the

floor; round which the sorrowing visitants might walk or sit. In such a place as this the Saviour lay, and on its door when rolled away the angel sat.

Christianity, as founded by its great Leader while on earth, neither enjoins nor forbids anatomy particularly. But we may infer from the whole volume of Inspiration, and from the universal instincts of humanity in all ages, that the present practice of dissection is not authorised by the divine will. The physician Luke, the evangelist, does not appear to have acquired his skill in the profession by any such methods. "*Liberality of sentiment, and freedom of opinion,*" in our day have been supposed to accomplish the emancipation of the human mind from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition. But let not such halcyon words bereave us of the necessary dependence we are bound to entertain, toward a *Revelation of divine authority*. For if no injunction or countenance be found therein to support the practice, let us beware of the consequences of unnecessarily indulging in it. And it has been an important and doubtful question, among the most enlightened Civilians, whether, in *any case*, even for murder, suicide, or any other crime, dissection ought to be permitted.

It has lately been asked, in a letter addressed to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, "Are a thousand young gentlemen who annually attend the Medical School in Edinburgh, and have devoted themselves to the practice of medicine, to be deprived of the proper means of instruction, and to be sent abroad into the world incompetent to the discharge of the duties which they have publicly engaged to perform?" I very briefly answer the question, by a repetition of my motto, "*Thou shalt not steal;*" and I trust those young gentlemen, or their underling harpies, will not attempt to invalidate the divine command, nor the laws of the land founded upon it; lest they should feel the fatal effects of their temerity.

It is certainly highly gratifying to be assured, that "The difficulty, or rather impossibility of procuring subjects, upon which to lecture, has become so great, that there is every probability of the medical school in Edinburgh, in particular, being speedily ruined completely;" and that, "professional gentlemen who gave instructions in this way, have, during the present Session, been under the necessity of abandoning their former occupation." The vigilance recently displayed so generally throughout the country, in protecting our church yards, sufficiently explains the cause.

But there is very little danger, that the medical school of Edinburgh will fall into ruin ; the eminence and learning of its professors being safe-guards-against such an apprehension. But admit that its decline should be the consequence, we must not patronize the commission of crime, in order that pecuniary advantages may result from it. The City of Edinburgh can well sustain the loss of a few medical students, by which the country around would be saved a much larger sum, necessary for protecting the dead : and the honour due to its medical professors, worthy of the name, be preserved inviolate.

It will now be said, that I am hostile to anatomy, and the progress of science, and that I entertain some of those narrow views and prejudices, that distinguish the vulgar. No, I fervently desire the honourable increase of medical knowledge, and will never presume to deny the beneficial consequences resulting to medical teachers and pupils, from public dissections, which the law authorises. But is every pitiful student, or presumptuous instructor, who may find it possible to obtain a few pounds, a right to lay it out in the purchase of a human body, to gratify their ignorant and vain curiosity, who in all probability will never add a single iota to the knowledge of the human frame already possessed ? I desire to know what valuable discoveries you have made ? What advantage to science has your licentious and incredible number of dissections produced ? Have you effected the grand object to which all your studies should tend, A SUPERIOR SKILL IN THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF DISEASE ? Let us examine the melancholy lists of mortality, and the diminished age of man, for an evidence of your capabilities in modern times.

Is it not ascertained, that in other climes whose atmospheric salubrity in any degree corresponds with our own, that diseases are less frequent and numerous, life's duration extended, and death less painful ? You invent theories, and collect adherents, write books and disseminate error. Next age shews their absurdity. On their ruins some new hypothesis arises. That also time crumbles into nought ; you wrangle and bite one another, while the patient public inly laughs, and pities. " 'The mighty mock defrauders of the tomb.' " You ought to know, that there are a number of Diseases that threaten death, which contribute greatly to health and the prolongation of life ; consequently applications for their removal must be attended with danger, and premature death. A learned writer, enumerating the causes of health and longevity, concludes, by saying, LESS PHYSIC, AND MORE EXERCISE.

“ Hence utility
Thro’ all conditions ; hence the joys of health ;
Hence strength of arm, and clear judicious thoughts ;
Hence corn and wine and oil, and all in life
Delectable.”

I will not dispute the value of some of the discoveries of modern times, such as the circulation of the blood by Harvey, the Absorbent System by Hunter, or others of minor consequence. But the discovery of Dr Jenner, the *Vaccine Inoculation*, is infinitely more beneficial to mankind, and owes not its origin to dissection. If you look back to the Father of Medicine, before the Christian Era, you will find his Aphorisms the surprise and the model to regulate the practice of modern times ; written too when human dissections were not known. If you examine the records of former times, you will discover, that even Surgery, in a number of cases was practised with greater success. The facility and cheapness with which bodies have been recently furnished to medical students, instead of being useful to their after practice, hath produced a contrary result. For these Tyros, after the dissection of a body, vainly imagine themselves qualified to operate upon the living subject, and their consequent failure is matter of notoriety, and deep lamentation ; but the natural result of presumption and inexperience.

I again ask, by what means the renowned Sydenham acquired so perfect knowledge in the cure of diseases ? Was it from the theory of the schools, or from frequent dissections ? No, It was acquired by *personal observation, patient investigation, long continued and extensive practice*. And these upstarts in medical science would do well to exhibit a little more modesty in their pretensions, either to lift the knife or prescribe even after having passed examination, or obtaining a diploma. The life is our most valuable possession, and it is sincerely to be desired, that the numbers of those, who ignorantly sport with it, should be diminished or better taught.

It is far from my inclination to give countenance to Empirics and Quacks, whose hyperbolical assertions and lying attestations only recommend them and their Nostrums, and Specifics to the public, too often to the injury of regularly educated practitioners, and the disgrace of the science of medicine.

But it must not be controverted that Mothers, Nurses, and other constant Attendants on the sick, have frequently acquired more skill in the symptoms, and cure of a number of diseases, than medical men even of considerable knowledge and standing. For the truth of this remark, I appeal to

the conscience of many of the faculty, whom I have heard confess it : and I know its truth.

It might be imagined, were it not for the anatomical mania, which is so epidemical at present, or the gratification of some other dangerous propensity, that our young gentlemen students, would never risk their delicate fingers and olfactories, to the dangerous infection of such putrid masses, as their necessities sometimes oblige them to dissect. It might be thought that the cadaverous effluvia, necessarily left on their persons, would make them far less agreeable to the delicate sensibilities of the ladies. But seriously, is danger not to be apprehended by the Citizens of Edinburgh, from the general and simultaneous dissection of animal bodies, in a state of putrefaction ? And ought not the Police Establishment to interfere to prevent it ; to preserve the inhabitants from the consequences of an atmosphere overcharged with such pestilential miasmas ?

I am fully persuaded, were dissections less common, were bodies obtained with the greatest difficulty, and *never by purchase*, that public dissections would be regarded as the highest treat, and the privilege of attending lectures given by our most eminent Professors, would incite an anxiety in a greater number of students to attend, who by previous and succeeding reading and meditation, added to the demonstrations of the professor, would give them far more useful and satisfactory information than what can possibly be obtained from their own, or the dissections of private or less learned practitioners.

And besides this, a very considerable portion of anatomical knowledge might be acquired by drawings, wax, and anatomical preparations ; and the dissections of the lower animals ; which appear to have been the only sources from whence the ancients imbibed their wonderful knowledge.

And it is a laudable practice among some of the most eminent teachers of surgery, with a view to give facility and precision to the hands of their pupils, for a considerable time, to employ them in cutting through the different folds of leather, in the manner and number directed. For it has been observed, that it is a capital defect in persons, not previously taught some handicraft employment, that they generally go very awkwardly to work with their fingers. But it must be confessed, that none of these methods are calculated fully to develop the structure and functions of the human body ; which when obtained lawfully is undoubtedly the best subject, from which accurate information can be derived : For no resemblance is equal to nature.

But the very general dissection and destruction of human bodies that has taken place in Edinburgh for years, is beyond all indurance, and loudly calls upon all ranks to exert themselves in putting a stop to it; by discountenancing private dissections, and bringing to justice, all persons that venture to use a body in any way, not enjoined by law, or permitted by civilized humanity.

And certainly, the Incorporation of Surgeons, should be the last to oppose such measures, when they must know that in the year 1711, when the difficulty of procuring subjects was much greater than at present, they published the following, (I fear hypocritical) manifesto of their innocence, with a view to prevent a tumult in the city, which in a few years after burst out in a most formidable riot; which threatened destruction to their Hall, and all their preparations; and which the Magistrates quelled, with the greatest difficulty, and offered “a reward of Twenty Pounds Sterling, to those who would discover the persons who were accessory to stealing dead bodies;” it goes on to say, “that of late there has been a violation of the sepulchres in the Grey Friars Church Yard, by some who most unchristianly have been stealing, or at least attempting to carry away the bodies of the dead out of their graves; a practice to be abhorred by all good christians, and which by the law of all nations is severely punishable. But that which affects them most, is a scandalous report most maliciously spread about the town, that some of their number are accessory which they cannot allow themselves to think, considering that the Magistrates of Edinburgh have always been ready and willing to allow them what dead bodies fell under their gift, and thereby plentifully supplied their theatre for many years past. That should any of their number be convicted in violating sepulchres, they shall be expelled their society, their names razed out of their books, their acts of admissions torn, and shall forfeit all the freedom and privileges they enjoy by being freemen of their incorporation. And if any apprentice or servant belonging to any of their number shall be found guilty of the foresaid crime, his name shall be expunged out of their books; he shall forfeit the benefit of his indentures; and shall be expelled his master’s service with disgrace.” And it is greatly to be desired, that their successors in our day, would enter into the same obligations, and give evidence of their sincerity.

The Town Council of Edinburgh, when the celebrated Dr Pitcairn formed his anatomical theatre, considered that the dissection of *one body*, in the winter session, was fully suffi-

cient for the purposes of instruction; and this was granted upon the express condition, that the intestines should be buried in two, and the remainder of the body in ten days at the farthest. Whence then arises the continual and increasing demand for bodies? How is it that such dastardly, and illegal methods are resorted to, and justified by many from whom better things might be expected?

In the letter to the Lord Advocate, dated 6th Dec. 1822, by the learned traveller Ch. M. Adair, we find him pleading, that “necessity has no law.” “That it compels shipwrecked mariners to resort to the dreadful alternative of sacrificing one of their number to preserve the remainder.” Were we all dying of hunger, then there would be some cause to justify dissection; but the canabalian voracity of the Edinburgh medical school, cannot plead such necessity to satiate their appetite. Ah! my dear sir, have you no compassion, have you no fraternal feelings? Ask your own heart to begin first with a father, mother, brother, sister, wife or child; and tell me its answer? Is not the melancholy, but agreeable sympathy you feel, more estimable than the callosity of anatomical gratification? You tell us also, “That unless a remedy be provided, the country will be impoverished, by throwing her revenue into the pockets of foreigners; that the morals of our youth will be contaminated by foreign vices, which our medical students will imbibe, by going abroad for instruction.” It has already been stated that the country must gain considerably, even in a pecuniary point of view, by the diminution of dissections. And although subjects were procured as cheap as L.1 or L.2!! (the price stated by you) a number of our young gentlemen students, who can afford it, and who possess a rambling taste, would notwithstanding visit Paris, or other parts of the continent; although their morals should be contaminated by going abroad. Your hints, however, upon this subject, I trust will be attended to; and at least have an influence upon parents and tutors; not to gratify their *Charge* by permitting these dangerous excursions. But for reasons already mentioned, the splendor of the Edinburgh University can never be obscured by the absence of such wandering satellites. Do you still insist, that bodies *must* be obtained to support and continue “the most celebrated university in the world?” And have you determined to petition the Legislature to grant you them? I hope they will answer you as a certain king you have heard of did, “Let every one of the faculty become bound to deliver up his own body for dissection after

death, for the benefit and improvement of medical science." It is vain for the anatomical inquirer to argue the indispensable necessity of human bodies, to qualify him for the profession he has espoused. Money, undoubtedly, in a variety of cases is more necessary, but that necessity will never justify the carrying away his neighbour's purse. "Prejudice (you say) among the moderns, is a term applied to all bigotted opinions, formed by those who are grossly ignorant, or incapable to judge of the subject under discussion." Did you imbibe those sentiments respecting your countrymen, when you "studied for several years, in the most celebrated universities of France, Italy and Germany?" Sir, we desire to glory in this "great national prejudice," as you are pleased to call it, and you may vent your literary spleen at your leisure; I trust ineffectually; or return to the continent, where you may glut your anatomical propensities, or pursue your other avocations unmolested. You venture to tell us, we are "grossly ignorant;" take care that you be not *grossly impertinent*. Men of the most enlightened minds, in the highest ranks, closely embrace this detestation, and shudder at the bare idea of dissection after death: I am sure you feel it too. Will you now say, that you are willing to have your bones bleached after death, and hung up by wires in a dissecting room, with this label over you, "This is the skeleton of Ch. M. Adair?" Do I insult you? Pardon me, my dear Sir, it is not my intention. But is not your body equally well suited for such a purpose, as the poorest virtuous man's upon earth? And you know, the golden rule says, "*Do to others as you would wish them to do to you.*"

Yes, Sir, the invincible antipathy at dissection, and the blood hounds that cater for its supply is now so great, that many have proposed to burn the bodies of their relatives, or pour a dissolving menstrum into their coffins at interment, the more effectually to prevent their removal or use.

I have frequently imagined, that the rage for human dissection at present, arose in some degree from a perversity of spirit, or a love of novelty; strong propensions in the youthful mind. For were human bodies cheaply and plentifully supplied, it is more than probable, that in a short period they would be declined, and the dissection of the lower animals substituted, or other methods of instruction preferred. That this is not an hypothetical idea, the history of the science will demonstrate. And it has frequently been observed, that the progress of science in every age, has been

retarded by the enthusiasm of its professors. In the words of Gamaliel's eloquent pupil, I solemnly warn you, "Let him that stole steal no more."

I have not been deterred by any threat or fear of consequences from the discharge of what I considered a duty; neither will the imputation of "ignorance, or the aim at popularity" affect me,—“That raising dead bodies, in the present state of the study of medical science in Edinburgh, may be considered as a necessary evil,” is perfectly *absurd and contradictory, illegal, and sinful*; FOR NOTHING CAN BE MEDICALLY RIGHT THAT IS MORALLY WRONG.

After having made these miscellaneous remarks, I proceed now, as dispassionately as possible, more particularly to the examination of the shocking plans proposed by Mr Bower, for supplying the Medical School of Edinburgh with dead bodies; suggested, he says, “with the most unfeigned modesty and diffidence!” He, however, does not hint the assistance he must undoubtedly have derived from the precursory letter, of the learned gentleman, Ch. M. Adair; published little more than three months previous to his own. I shall also beg leave to suggest another legislative method for obtaining medical and surgical knowledge; unobnoxious as I conceive to any reasonable objections.

I. “It is proposed, in the first place, that the dead bodies of all criminals, without exception, should, by act of parliament, be delivered for dissection.” This is, indeed, a sweeping, harsh, and indiscriminating request. Our criminal code of laws, by the most enlightened legislators, has been generally regarded far too sanguinary already, pointing us out as a nation that delights in the shedding of blood; as a people not governed by the mild principles of christianity which we profess, or as a nation, giving evidence that our religion and laws are not calculated to produce any moral influence on the manners of the people.

For no nation in the world condemns so many to death, and public execution. As an evidence of this, I need only refer to the year 1811, in which, in this country, there were 404 persons sentenced to death, out of a population of twelve millions. In France 264, out of twenty-seven millions. In 1820, there were no less than 1236 in England, and in France only 304.

It is most expedient that the punishment of death should be taken away, and substitute imprisonment or transportation. It is well known that in our ancient code, there are only *four* capital felonies; but at present about *four hundred*! These

laws are now considered so barbarous, that it is impossible to execute them ; hence impunity for crime is the natural consequence. I trust the time is approaching, when those noble senators, who have already raised their voices in parliament against these laws, will be successful, and bring us again to former times, to the Roman code, so well known to be tender of life. Is the man cruelly condemned to execution for stealing a few shillings, to be treated after death, in the same abhorrent manner as the vile, deliberate, barbarous, and common murderer ? O ! no. This demand, and others that follow, are so extravagantly presumptuous, as to excite the strongest aversion to the man, however distinguished he may be, that would venture even to suggest such measures, to which the government of the country can never listen, but must spurn from their house disdainfully any petition fraught with such unheard of barbarity.

Were the bodies of all criminals granted, is it not natural to suppose, that to oblige the faculty, whose necessities at any time might be pressing, that a leaning in their favour, and against the pannel, might be entertained by the judge ; by which he would be inclined to award the sentence of death, instead of some other arbitrary punishment ? These demands should alarm the living, lest a portion of their number should also be considered as being necessary for the more fully demonstrating the structure and functions of the human body ! Hear the gentleman. “ As soon as it was perceived that opposition answered no end, the necessity of compliance would be felt.” There is a remark for you ! The tyranny of the legislature complimented, and the degradation of the people recommended !!

He says, “ It has frequently happened, that criminals who have been guilty of the most barbarous murders, have lamented, when under sentence of death, that their bodies were to be delivered for dissection.” This is a confirmation of the instinctive aversion entertained by the most hardened felons, —the reasons for which, rarely owe their cause to “ selfishness or ignorance,” assigned by you.

As they have been the “ architects of their own fortune,” you think their bodies should be dissected ? It is an injunction of scripture, “ Let those who stand take heed, lest they fall.” The time was, when they like you, might utter the same inconsiderate language, when happy and virtuous ; but the influence of vice, the contamination of example, and the indulgence of passion, caused the perpetration of the last

act of wickedness : And who can tell in youth, what age may produce ?

The statute, the 25th Geo. II. ch. 37. ordains, “ That for the better preventing the horrid crime of murder, it is ordered generally, that the sentence shall be for delivery of the body to surgeons to be dissected, unless ordered to be hung in chains ; and that in no case shall the body be buried until it be dissected.” The learned gentleman, Ch. M. Adair, asks, “ upon what principle is it that the law is entitled to order the persons of criminals for dissection ? It is certainly not as a punishment, as the dead feel not, and the laws breathe no revenge.” But certainly it was the laudable design of our legislators to make the punishment of our greatest malefactors as affrighting and public as possible ; with a view, as it is said in the act, “ *For the better preventing of the horrid crime of murder,*” rather than for the encouragement of the study of anatomy. For the command delivered by Moses, in the 35th chap. Num. says, “ Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a Murderer, which is guilty of death, but he shall be surely put to death : So that ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are, for blood it defileth the land ; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” He further says, “ The objection upon which the greatest stress has been laid, is the violence that it offers to the feelings of surviving relatives.” “ But it very frequently happens, that the relations of malefactors have little or no feeling on the subject, being tainted with the same or similar vices.” Now, sir, I appeal to yourself, is not this a most afflicting and inhuman accusation, when you must be sensible that the reverse is frequently the case ? That tender youth, that was dandled in the lap of virtue, ease, and plenty ; or, this once innocent, but now unfortunate daughter, “ lur’d by a villain from her native home,” or many others, being ashamed to beg, are obliged to steal. Will you harrow up the otherways strongly afflicted feelings of affectionate parents, or other dear relatives, by the aggravating and disgraceful punishment of dissection, for crimes unworthy of death in its mildest form ? Ask no more—the law gives you murderers and suicides, which is your next request.

II. “ The dead bodies of such as are *felo de se*, ought to be delivered for dissection.” To this no reasonable objection that I know of can be produced. The crime of suicide is so

horrible in itself, that, (as Blair expresses it), “No frenzy half so desperate as this.”

Self Murder!—Name it not: our Island’s shame,
That makes her the reproach of neighbouring States.

Unheard-of tortures

Must be reserv’d for such: these herd together,
The common damn’d shun their society,
And look upon themselves as Fiends less foul.

I have frequently thought, from the almost uniform sentence of the coroner’s inquest, being “insanity,” that a feeling of sympathy for this crime has been very generally felt; for it is so contrary to the natural instincts of universal animation, that none almost can admit its commission under any other idea, than an irresistable and sudden alienation of mind. But there are very many instances upon record, where the utmost deliberation and calm determination were displayed. And I agree with you, that “every mark of infamy ought to be attached to the perpetrators of such a crime, and their bodies could not better be disposed of than delivering them for dissection.” And these, with another set of criminals, I mean the ravishers of virginity; and those who *openly vilify* the oracles of God, or deny his existence, should all be classed under the forecited statute.

III. “The bodies of such as die in Bridewell, the public Prisons, Lunatic, or Magdalane Assylums, ought to be granted for the same purpose, if they are unclaimed.”

Here again the demand expands into a wider field, supported by an iniquitous grant by the Town Council to Mr Alexander Monteith Surgeon in 1694, for thirteen years, which I must quote in full. It was enacted, “That none shall be comprehended under this act, except such as are sent to the correction-house (Bridewell) by a judicial act for *gross* immoralities proven against them; and if any friends or others desire to have the bodies buried, in that case it shall be allowed, provided they pay into the Kirk-Treasurer what expenses he has been at upon the said deceased persons. During the above time Mr Monteith is to serve the whole town’s poor *gratis*, and he is to be paid for what drugs he shall necessarily furnish them, as the said drugs cost himself only.”

The inconsideration and cruelty of this transaction may rank with that of some of the celebrated collectors of slaves on the coast of Guinea. Who gave the Town Council a right to dispose of the bodies of their fellow creatures sent to Bridewell, to make a compensation to the community they had injured?

Admit that *gross immoralities* should have been proved against them, they may have repented, and resolved to amend their lives. And though the term of their confinement may not have expired, must their poor bodies fill up the sentence from which death should set them free? Where will “friends or others,” be found willing, or able, to pay “the Kirk Treasurer what expenses he has been at,” or to settle the sum necessarily attendant on their interment? This, undoubtedly, was intended to prevent all inquiry. How does it appear that Mr Monteith served the town *gratis*; when he received such a valuable compensation for his trouble? I would desire to know if his accounts were placed on record, how they appear, as to Dr. and Cr. Did he say. *To profit lost on medicines and attendance on the poor, L. By human bodies furnished from Bridewell, by the Town Council L.* “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon.” Such a nefarious bargain is a stain upon the character and memory of Surgeon Monteith, and indisputably a libel on the Town Council, of the most enlightened city of Europe.

You ask for the dead of “public prisons,” must these also become by a perverse discipline what their history proves, the fruitful field of death, reservatories for your supply? Yes, an extraordinary diminution of food, inattention to cleanliness and fresh air, and many other causes may be made subservient to premature mortality. Go to the Bastile and Calcuttas hole, or other marts of death, and feast in thought your greedy maws. Behold your prey. Here a man dies committed for a paltry sum,—there another on mere suspicion. On this side falls the undaunted patriot,—and on that, the incomplying statesman. The thoughtless youth, or old repentant sinner. Shall these, or thousands more be given to fill the hands of those who hold the anatomizing knife, and meet the bloody felons dreadful fate?

The unhappy poet Dodd, most earnestly entreats,

“Unto crimes
 Inflections just and adequate assign;
 On reformation or example sole,
 And all impartial, constantly intent
 Banish the rage for blood.”

Unheard of rage for human flesh! You wait like vultures for the battle field. “If unclaimed!” how pitiful the subterfuge! How thin the low disguise! How many will not, dare not, cannot claim!

Lunatics too? Yes! Move on to the dissecting table, lo yonder wait the men of reason, ready to cut you in pieces. Ah! Sterne! M'Kenzie! men of feeling; why silent in the grave? Is no Harley left to pity or to shed a tear? Why, O Howard, is thy philanthropic voice unheard? No sympathising Hanway? Eden none? or other names renowned? Still, still, the ravenous school cries, give me more: who, like the barren embryo's shell, or "Creation's melancholy vault," never says, I have enough.—And must the poor reformed daughters of Magdalane be forced at last, even in death to yield their bodies to the concupisble gaze, and unhallowed touch of those who perchance erewhile enjoyed them, then abandoned to misery, disease and death? Perhaps they shout like Rome's vile monster, Behold how beautiful! O forgive me, ye fairest offspring of creation,—I have said too much for modest ears,—I would not offend my female readers,—I drop the veil.

" Oh British inhumanity! ye climes,
Ye foreign climes. Be not the truth proclaimed
Within your streets."

IV. "The bodies of those who die in hospitals, and are unclaimed, ought to be disposed of in the same way. "*First*, the Charity Work Houses; and *secondly*, the Infirmary." It is to these, you say, "that the teachers of anatomy must look for a supply of subjects upon which to lecture."

First, The Charity Work Houses are benevolent institutions, worthy of the highest commendation. Their founders, patrons, and supporters, boast of their philanthropic and disinterested views. Will they ever permit their gates to be opened for the old, infirm or destitute, to be prepared, as it were, for dissection? C. M. Adair says, "Do not our religious and moral duties bind us to make a fit return for the benefits and comforts we receive from others?" Must then the unfortunate, indigent, hospital dependant, consign his body to the faculty, from whom perhaps he never received any favour? Must he evince his gratitude to the managers of his last asylum, who likely have been amply remunerated for their trouble in attending him? Must the patrons of these asylums, who profess to protect, and support the miserable, at death abandon them, for the despicable and inadequate compensation of L.1 or L.2?! Is this "*a fit return*?" Did ever the founders, or supporters of these institutions contemplate such a vile and bloody recompense? No; it is impossible they can ever agree to such measures. Would they not

testify by a compliance, that they were actuated by the basest motives, that they wished to become panders to the schools of dissection? Would not all their pretensions for ameliorating the condition of the poor, be regarded as the vilest hypocrisy; and instead of gratitude, excite the execration of all mankind? Again the reservation is repeated, “if unclaimed,” to cover the base proposal. And who would guarantee that the bodies of such would be faithfully delivered up to their friends or relations, who it is probable would receive no notice of their death, or arrive too late to receive them?

Why is it that the bodies of *the poor* are only considered fit subjects for dissection? Forsooth, because a portion of their life owed its continuance to some charitable institution? Are there not very many pampered mendicants in the higher ranks of society, who have wallowed long on the vitals of the country, far more entitled to this horrible distinction? Have not the poor suffered enough of degradation in life? And why must such inhuman treatment follow them into death?

The various turns
Of fortune ponder! that your sons may want
What now, with hard reluctance, faint, ye give.

The only specious argument for such an enactment is contained in these words, it will “stimulate the youth to provide for eventual age or sickness.” But even this would be found inefficacious.

“For endless is the list of human ills,
And sighs might sooner fail than cause to sigh.”

For in every nation, and period of the world, sickness and destitution are the lot of many; and are not always the effects “of immorality in the inferior classes.” But admit that it were so, is it not the duty of the rich to endeavour to imitate the Bountiful Donor of their every blessing, by pouring their favours around them, on the “evil and the good.” Do you not know, that the impenitently wicked, very frequently receive their “good things in this life,” and the righteous, “labour and sorrow.” But the time is approaching when the impartial and discriminating Judge of the whole earth, will dispense to those, eternal punishment, to these, eternal bliss. All that they have to offer, is their sincere thanks; their prayers for blessings on their benefactors are before the throne on high.—But their bodies! for ever stifle the vile suggestion! Degrading idea! Insulting proposal!! You

further say, "That as the inmates have received their food, clothing, and lodging, that it is but reasonable they should contribute in a *lawful way*, to support the Institution by which they have profited during their lifetime." Now, Sir, who instructed you to offer such a wicked advice? "Who is it that makes *you* to differ?" Who gave *you* food, clothing, and lodging, but the same Almighty Being that provided these things for them? Are you not equally as dependent upon the providence of that Being as those you insult, and may he not soon force you to feel the same degradation? Do you not recollect that a GREAT ONE was once very poor, and had not a place whereon to lay his head. Those you despise now, may be the "Heirs to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Do you not know, that "God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom." And it is written also, "Not many wise, noble, or mighty, are called: For God has chosen the weak, the despised, and base things of this world, to confound the mighty." Have you not heard, that "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." What says the commission from heaven? "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." And hear and tremble, "Children, how hard is it for them who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" And listen with joy, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Is it lawful to violate the instructions of ETERNAL WISDOM (to which it pains me to think you seem a stranger), "YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN," is its oracle. How then can it be *lawful* to give away to dissection that body that was created by, and for God, and on whom death has only produced a temporary separation from the soul? It would be better for you at once to request the legislature to make a law, similar to the Indians of America, to execute all who are aged or infirm, and incapable of supporting themselves. O humanity, how dreadful is the abyss into which sin has sunk you! "There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart; It does not feel for man."

Secondly, The Infirmary is also to give up its dead. Will the *Royal Infirmary*, the boast of our country, the envy of the world, open its beautiful gates to the diseased under such a fearful stigma? Is the grand and national emporium, in which the congregated utility of the faculty is displayed; the focus and centre of attraction, to warm the affections, and to

draw forth the sympathies of the heart into acts of kindness, care, and skill, to become the tomb of its guests? You flaunt your gilded motto on high, "I WAS SICK AND YE VISITED ME." Ah! (says the passenger,) like the hypocritic friend, for a legacy, or, as reynard in the fable said to the lion, "I see the traces of their feet going towards your majesty's palace, but few coming back again." "NAKED AND YE CLOTHED ME." Aye! with terror and painful apprehensions of death and dissection! Is not your house the place of mourning, at which nature recoils? Diseases numerous, all kinds of maladies, "sicknesses of every size and symptom, racking pains, and bluest plagues," and groans resound from every gallery? Are you not satisfied with the ruinous malignity of sin? Will you add sorrow to the deeply afflicted, by distracting their minds with the apprehension of dissection? You are too learned to need information respecting the baneful effects of fear operating on the minds of your patients in retarding their cure. O desire ardently to fulfil the gracious design of your erection. Tarnish not the greatness of your Character by the vile imputation, that you love death and dead mens bones. Ye honourable guardians and restorers of health, violate not your sacred obligations, listen to no call or argument for dissection of an illegal nature, however anxious you may feel for the progress of science. Bury your dead with honour, deploring your want of success, and what ever others do, let the renown of *your* singularity become exemplary. Resist to the last joining in the *dissective confederacy*. Remember what Lactantius says, "Qui malum imatatur bonus esse non potest."

Never, I hope, will the legislature of Great Britain listen to such unjust and cruel proposals, to violate by any subsequent act the Charters granted to the founders or trustees of these institutions. But admit for a moment, from the specious representations and overwhelming influence of the faculty, that an act so disgraceful to humanity should be obtained, what would be the consequence? Would not that detestation to dissection so universally inherent in the human mind, influence the aged, destitute and diseased to suffer every privation, yea death itself, rather than enter the accursed and bloody walls of such hospitals? And would not an entire evacuation take place in these receptacles immediately after passing such an act? And would not the general antipathy to dissection influence a number of wealthy individuals, throughout the kingdom, to found and endow other establishments, for the reception of the miserable, not subjected to such

odious regulations. Let, I beseech you, this “*national prejudice*” alone, so honourable to humanity; and listen to a serious and excellent advice, although given by an heathen orator,—“*Ita vivamus ut rationem, nobis redendam arbitremur.*”

V. “The dead bodies of all Foundlings, of whatever age they may be, ought to be delivered for dissection.”

This also must be opposed. What! shall a country like Britain, the glory of the whole earth, and that most distinguished portion of it, the renowned capital of Scotland, seek from its parliament the bodies of foundlings? Are the innocent victims of maternal cruelty to become the nucleus for medical improvement? May not the father’s dissecting knife enter the bowels of his own child, begotten in an illicit amour? Awful idea! And will not the immediate dissection of foundlings prevent inquiry and detection, and cover crime? Are not these the *tender objects*, to call forth all the generous and manly feelings of humanity? What doctor would cut in pieces such innocent outcasts; unless possessed of a heart harder than the millstone? Dissection might produce the most poignant agony in the hearts of the unnatural mothers, but that is insufficient to justify the baseness of such a practice. Oh let the ill fated little innocents’ bodies receive the rites of the sepulchre, and engrave on their tomb,

Here lye the children of unnatural and bloody mothers;
And the neglected offspring of unhallowed fathers.

VI. “Such as are found dead upon the streets, and have none to claim them.”

The way worn traveller, far from his native home, spent by fatigue, or exhausted by hunger, lays himself down in the arms of death, and must the prowling jackalls of the medical monster make him also a prize, or seize on whatsoever carnage may come in their way? Must the victim of some base assassin, or bloody broil be also borne away to the dissecting rooms? Where is the Town Council that would defile their character by such an order? It cannot be believed, for those of 1694 are no more. They are bound by decency, by honour, and christianity, to provide from their funds, which they can well afford, “a field to bury strangers in,” and a sufficient sum for the expences of their interment.

VII. “The bodies of those who have none to claim them, ought to be appropriated to the same purpose.”

This, indeed, includes two or three of the proposals already made. Will you never be tired of expedients for the abundant supply of the Medical School of Edinburgh, to which you seem so entirely devoted? Ah, sir, where is the unfeigned “modesty and diffidence” of which you spoke, when you began to state your extraordinary demands? You seem hugely to plume yourself for having found out, as you would have it believed, a method to assist and protect the funds of the charitable institutions of Edinburgh; but their Treasurers will not be guided by your instructions, they are not to be seduced by the dastardly suggestion of such a sanguinary profit, nor puffed up by the approbation “of the numerous Students of Anatomy, at the Edinburgh Medical School.” I am sure you do not need to be told, that the Learned, the rich and the virtuous, may be in circumstances in distant lands, without a Friend to claim them. The brave soldier and hardy sailor, defenders of their country’s rights, may fall unheeded and unfriended in a foreign land. Some stranger’s pen may tell they fell—they died—and (oh, heart-rending thought), *were dissected*; and now the public eye feasts on their mangled fragments.—Behold the tears of deep affection fall in copious floods from sorrowing friends; hear the sighs and groans and bitter lamentations, at such a tale of woe. Have you, sir, like your learned prototype, Mr Adair, ever been in distant lands, and however great your merit, or pressing your necessity been without a friend? Tell me, when sick, and in the prospect of death, if the certainty of dissection gave you any alarm? You recollect your feelings,—they were painful,—you panted for your friends and native land;—you exclaimed, oh that I could rest in the sepulchre of ^{my} fathers, and prevent the exhibition of my body to the eyes of these unhallowed barbarians! Your feelings are the feelings of humanity;—propose no afflictions to others, you would not wish to endure yourself.—O! that I could die and be hid in the coffin, is the dying speech of some expiring bashful maiden. Alas! alas! Mr Bower, did you think of these scenes of sorrow when you raged for dissection? You ask, in *what case* will I allow you a body for the benefit of the noblest and most useful science on earth? I have told you already, and I almost repent the concession; but the law ordains it, and I cannot retract;—the adventitious circumstance of “persons of this description being generally in the lower ranks of life,” is an argument no son of Adam should produce; before you die you may be one of those.

VIII. “If any person be willing to contract with a lec-

turer on anatomy, or a surgeon, or medical student, for his body after death, let this be considered as a legal transaction."

Here again a diabolical ingenuity is displayed, and brought forward with an astonishing degree of serene apathy. Not yet satisfied with the expected bodies of murderers, criminals, prisoners, hospital dependents, foundlings, &c. proposed to be obtained by compulsory measures; this champion for dissection now commences the still more brutalizing overtures, for voluntary resignation to the medical school.—Sir, I also have heard of some abandoned criminals negotiating such a contract; but I desire to ask, which of the two, the living or condemned felon, should be regarded as the basest monster? I do not profess the possession of a deal of legal knowledge, but nature and revelation enable me to say, that if the laws are built on these foundations, a contract for lucre or any other unworthy or selfish gratification of this nature, must undoubtedly be illegal,—not only illegal; but heinously sinful, and obnoxious to the wrath of God.—“Whatever we fondly call our own, belongs to heaven’s great Lord;” for our bodies, as well as our souls, we must at last render an account to the Judge of the whole earth. And how will the guilty disposer, and more shameful purchaser, be able to answer at that great day? No legislative sanction can ever justify such a nefarious and unwarrantable transaction. If we have a right to dispose of our body because it belongs to us; the same kind of reasoning will justify the sale of our soul, because it is ours also. But this is so horrid, that it resembles the conduct of those who are said to have made a bargain with Satan, for both body and soul. As Ahab, “which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.”

A person anxious for the advancement of medical knowledge, in whose body some extraordinary appearance, or unknown disease is manifested; may very justly order a simple investigation, for detection of the phænomena after death. This certainly is allowable and praise-worthy; and ought not to be opposed by friends or others; who should consider that such an investigation must be ultimately beneficial to society: And this should solemnly be allowed to take place, by the voluntary consent of all concerned, without any kind of bribery, or recourse to any other unjustifiable method. But of this more hereafter.

IX. “If the relations, &c. of the deceased are willing to dispose of the body, let this be considered as a legal transaction.”

I have now, with considerable anguish, arrived at the

acme of all your requisitions, which you say was the result of "some reading and much reflection." And did you, my dear sir, sit down and meditate coolly such immoral proposals, so injurious to the country in which you dwell? Did your overweening attachment to the interest of the medical school of Edinburgh, blind your understanding so far as to render you indifferent to the popularity you have acquired as an author? Could you expect that such afflicting proposals could be received with satisfaction, and be silently acquiesced in without a reply? Although your own heart felt no repugnance in the promulgation of such unhallowed and demoralizing suggestions, it shewed no superlative wisdom to estimate the feelings of the public from such a standard; certainly you could not expect to pass with impunity. If in the tranquil moments of reflection, you feel perfectly happy in what you have done, I must confess myself an utter stranger to the human heart: the cure you propose is indisputably worse than the disease. I am happy that you confess your last request "is unknown in this country," and I trust for ever will; and I hope for the honour of humanity, that you libel the cities of London and Dublin. Would to God I could prove your assertion to be false; but the degradation of man is beyond imagination great, and from this belief, I am fearful you can substantiate its truth.—But, O call not on the honourable Representatives of our country to sanction these unholy deeds.

Bodies obtained by such means, instead of "contributing essentially to the reputation of the Edinburgh medical school," must, beyond dispute, produce in the minds all those intitled to the honourable appellation of men, the directly contrary effect.

The "singular inconsistency in the law," of which you complain, should be made known to every student; with a view to deter such numbers from engaging in this avocation. The law ought to be pronounced consistent; the bodies of murderers, &c. having been considered by the legislature fully sufficient for the instruction of "naval and military surgeons," and others; therefore the violators of it are deserving of punishment, without the least alleviation.

If the Right Honourable the Lord Provost and Lord Advocate, the Honourable Magistrates of Edinburgh, the Patrons of the University, the Senatus Academicus, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal Medical Society, the Royal Physical Society, &c. concur in an application to parliament, and be successful; our character as a christianised and humane people, must be for ever annihilated. Far rather

let the members of these honourable institutions give weight to a Petition for an Act, far more advantageous to the advancement and utility of medical science, and creditable to our country, human nature, morality and religion.

GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY,

In a little time, I hope the powerful voice of some Wilberforce will be heard within St Stephen's walls, equally as successful in the suppression of the robbery of the dead, as his was in the abolition of the slavery of the living. For who, in possession of the knowledge of such deeds of darkness, can sit down regardless of the violence offered to the noblest feelings of our nature? Who can remain indifferent to the violation of the law, and to the insults offered to every principle of Christianity. What advantage, in any point of view, can you derive from the publication of such barbarous proposals, in direct collision with the feelings and habits of the people? It is impossible for any man not divested of every honourable feeling, to look with indifference on the frequent violations of the laws of nature, nations, and God, without indignation. Who can hear such profligate suggestions, to which validity is solicited, unmoved? He who produces arguments to extenuate or approve a crime so monstrous and horrid, must be considered an Accomplice, and branded as such. Be not surprised, that the native instincts should burst into open violence against the perpetrators of such crimes. Do not say that I am determined by some unworthy motive, to raise by exaggerated representations, a popular clamour against the Professors of Medical Science. I appeal to yourselves, I appeal to numerous, tangible, and indisputable evidence, if a race of carnivorous wolves, bearing the likeness of men, have not for years past been purveyors for the Medical School of Edinburgh, and other places of dissection?

Despise not the humble individual who now addresses you, who through life has always regarded your profession with an enthusiastic respect. Listen to the words of affection. O lift not your voices in defence of what must sink you in the estimation of the wise and good. Let the song of ridicule on this serious subject, forever depart from your lips. Let the accustomed honour and dignity of your profession revive. Disturb not the feelings of your patients, that you may become successful in your practice. Shew that you have feelings, that you may reign in their affections. Disperse that horror, which naturally arises when they behold you. Teach them to die, after having done all in your power to preserve them alive. Then shall you live respected and die regretted.

Then, through the merits of HIM who was once a pale and bloody corpse in Joseph's tomb, you will be raised up to participate in the ineffable pleasures of the heavenly paradise, where disease, or sickness of any kind never enters, but where health and joy forever ever reign.

I now proceed to lay before you a method, which in my opinion, will obviate all the difficulties that impede the acquirement and progress of surgical and physical knowledge ; which will allay the popular ferment excited against its professors ; and render the violations of the graves of the dead entirely useless, or extremely dangerous.

For this most desirable purpose, I beg leave most humbly to suggest, that an act of parliament should be passed immediately, containing the following provisons, or others which the superlative wisdom of the legislature may deem necessary for the advancement of medical science, or the honour of the country.

It might begin, by saying,
That representations having been made to us, that disturbances in various parts of the country have arisen, in consequence of the frequent and daring perpetration, of the detestible crime of violating the Sepulchres of the Dead, and from thence carrying away Bodies by night, for the purposes of dissection ; and as this crime is so abhorrent to all good Christians, and contrary to the laws of all civilized nations, and to prevent the recurrence of such riots in future, and for the promotion of Medical Science in the British Empire, we enact, &c. That any person or persons found *in the act* of disinterring a Human Corpse in any church yard or burying place in the night, shall be considered as Felons, and be fired on or otherwise destroyed, without any legal punishment ensuing.

That all persons, in whose possession a human body shall be discovered, and which shall be proved not to have been legally obtained, or the body of a murderer, or other condemned felon subject to dissection, shall be, after trial, condemned to death, and their bodies delivered for dissection, to any authorized medical professor or lecturer, for the instruction of their pupils or students.

That the more effectually to guard against this crime, and to leave no ground for its alleged necessity for the promotion of the science of medicine ; the following provisions and regulations shall immediately take place throughout the united kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the colonies, and dependencies thereunto belonging.

I. That a Medical Board of seven learned Physicians shall

be appointed (under certain regulations and emoluments), in the cities of London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, to receive, revise, and publish an ANNUAL REPORT, upon the first day of January, every year, of all such cases as shall be considered worthy of notice; which shall have been transmitted to them from the different medical practitioners throughout the Empire, with such remarks and engravings as shall be deemed necessary; which Reports shall be furnished, agreeably to the following Regulations:—

1st, That any person dying, of whatever rank, age, or sex they may be, whose diseases, or their cause, were not understood by the medical attendants: or in which the usual *methods of cure* were unsuccessful. In this case, the Medical Attendants, if they consider the case of importance for the benefit of the science, or of the public, shall *solicit* the relations or friends of the deceased to be allowed to open the body for examination. But should this be refused, they may address a written representation, (signed by not less than three authorised medical practitioners), of the *singular nature* of the case, to any two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, within the county, craving to be permitted to examine the body. And should the said Justices sign a warrant for the examination; the three medical practitioners shall proceed with it to the house in which the body lies, and proceed to the examination, in company with as many students or apprentices as the apartment can conveniently contain, without in any way being obstructed or molested in the exercise of their duty.

2dly, That a relation or friend, or any person appointed by a relation or friend, shall always be present at such examination.

3dly, That no examination, in any case, shall proceed, till forty-eight hours have elapsed, after the death of the person.

4thly, That no unmarried person, whether relative, friend, or medical student, shall be permitted to be present at the examination of the body of a female, of whatever age, condition, or denomination she may have been. If death resulted from Parturition, licenced midwives shall be invited to be present.

5. That in no case shall any part of the body, however valuable, be allowed to be carried away, without the *free* consent of the nearest relatives, or person appointed by them to be present at the examination.

6. That no examination of the body shall proceed farther

than is necessary, fully to develop the *nature and cause* of the disease of which the person died.

7. That the examination must proceed in the house, and in the apartment, in which the body shall be laid by the connexions.

8. That in no case, shall a longer period than *one hour* be permitted for examination.

9. That a becoming and solemn decency shall be observed by all present.

10. That the principal medical gentleman, by whom the patient was attended, shall be the operator, in laying open the body for examination; the other two shall take short notes upon the spot, preparatory to making out the Report to the medical board.

11. That the body shall be carefully sewed up, and dressed in the most decent manner, and every thing offensive to the feelings removed, before any other person be permitted to enter the apartment.

12. That a carefully digested report of the case, signed and sworn to, by the before-mentioned three medical gentlemen, shall be before the expiry of one month, transmitted by post, to any of the before-named medical boards, as shall be most convenient.

13. That each medical board shall be bound to transmit, as early as possible, after the first of January, every year, a printed copy of these reports, to *every lawful practitioner* within their jurisdiction, free from every expence.

14. That the Regulations and Rules prescribed by the medical boards, shall direct, and give authority to the conduct of every medical practitioner, &c. &c. &c.

A STATUTE of this nature will lead to the discovery of diseases of which we are still in a great degree ignorant; will give an insight into the human viscera, so ardently desired; and become a durable foundation on which to build medical knowledge, which will stand the test of time and experience. And as there is no distinction of ranks, all will feel inclined willingly to submit, without any opposition, to a measure fraught with such advantage to the world.

None will deny, no, not the most learned practitioner, that cases sometimes occur in the course of practice, veiled in the deepest obscurity, which resist every effort to subdue or remove them. By an examination of the bodies of their patients after death, they will be enabled to discover the mistaken ideas entertained of the nature and cause of the disease that pro-

duced death ; and the reasons of the inefficacy of the remedies prescribed. By this plan, the medical practitioner will constantly be improving himself in the knowledge and cure of diseases ; the only essential requisite to the character of a good physician ; such a plan will be highly useful to others, from the number of substantiated facts thereby placed on record. By this means a fund of useful knowledge will be acquired, Errors in practice will be prevented, and Diseases hitherto the opprobria medicorum will be understood, and effectual remedies for their removal be discovered. What at present seems inscrutable, will be rendered easy to be conceived, both in the cause and effect, and must be attended with the utmost benefit to posterity. It evidently will not only be of excellent advantage to the practitioner, but it will also give an opportunity which is not possessed at present, for the *more general and necessary improvement* of apprentices and students, the rising hope of the medical profession.

Every Anatomist must be convinced, that the more recent the Subject, the more strongly will the appearances be portrayed ; for sometime after death, those parts that had been previously affected, rapidly suffer a change ; consequently are less suited to become the subject of satisfactory investigation ; and when putrefaction has made considerable advances, the difficulties will be insurmountable. In support of this *Scheme of Instruction*, I might produce the opinion of the most celebrated physicians. Dr William Hunter says, that the most probable means of improving and perfecting medical knowledge, would be “ *A more general and accurate examination of diseases after death.*” The opinion of such an eminent man should give considerable weight to any measure. This opinion is now becoming more general. A periodical work, entitled “ *The Medical and Physical Journal*” has, it is well known, been conducted on a plan something like this for many years, by three learned physicians, with the utmost skill, and highly advantageous to the increase and dissemination of this, the most beneficial of all sciences. And that it should go on and increase, *from Legitimate Sources*, should be the ardent desire of every friend of humanity.

The public should be under no alarm respecting the frequency, or compulsory nature of these examinations. For when the nature of the enactment proposed is fully considered, such fears cannot justly be entertained ; and cases, I trust, would be extremely rare, where compulsion would be necessary.

MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY, AND HONOURABLE
LEGISLATORS,

You feel it your duty to enact, and give sanction to Laws less momentous. Happy, O happy! would I feel, if my feeble voice, in the preceding *Hints*, should in any, even the lowest respect, be the means to elevate the character of our country, and meliorate the state of all mankind.

MY LORD, AND GENTLEMEN,

I desire now to take my leave of you and the public, craving your indulgence and pardon, if my feelings, in which the country at present so generally participate, have in any respect carried me beyond the bounds of discretion. I trust that those medical gentlemen who do honour to their profession, their country, and humanity, will accept of my apology, if in any respect, what has been advanced in haste should appear to insult their character, or diminish their well earned fame.—I am,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble servant,

A MEMBER

OF THE MORT-SAFE ASSOCIATION
OF LINLITHGOW.

LINLITHGOW, }
May 31, 1823.

THE END.

DESCRIPTION

OF

THE MORT-SAFES.

I CONCEIVE it will be very acceptable to the Public in general, and particularly beneficial to Associations that may be formed for the protection of the dead, who may feel a disinclination to endure the laborious and dangerous method of watching their Church Yards, without intermission, to subjoin a short

DESCRIPTION OF THE MORT-SAFES USED IN THE CHURCH YARD OF LINLITHGOW.

There are three sizes of Safes, adapted for different ages, made on the same principle, but different in weight.

The first, or largest size, capable of receiving within it the largest Coffins, weighs altogether about twelve hundred pounds, having forty four bars, four and a half feet in length, two inches broad, and three-eighths of an inch in thickness of malleable Iron. These bars pass through holes in a Cast Metal frame, which is six inches broad, and about one inch and a quarter thick, and intersect one another through mortices. They are let singly into their places to the head, and support the frame in the grave, which is five feet deep, ready for the reception of the Coffin.

At interment the Coffin is let down in the usual manner, and covered with earth, which is beaten in, till it reaches the frame. The pannelled lid, which is also of cast Iron, is then brought, and let on by a projecting catch to the frame on one end, and is fixed down by two strong Iron pins, which are rivetted on the other. The whole is then covered with the remaining earth, and the grave is finished in the common form, and not known from another. It may be satisfactory

to the Public to be assured, that these Safes are a perfect security against every means of removal that can possibly be supposed within the power of the nocturnal Depredators. It has been calculated, that a power of not less than fifteen tons, would be sufficient to remove one of these Safes from the earth in a mass, one day after interment. And the length of time necessary, and the noise attendant on their removal in pieces precludes the supposition of any successful attempt being made to steal any body that rests within them.—The expence of these Safes was collected by voluntary subscriptions, and instalments from three classes of persons, according to their circumstances.

By a late resolution of the Association, these Safes are not to be removed from the ground till six months after interment.—The business of the Church Yard is now conducted by a Committee of persons, annually elected from the Association, who keep a “Book of Interments,” and are governed by other printed “Regulations and Rules.”

